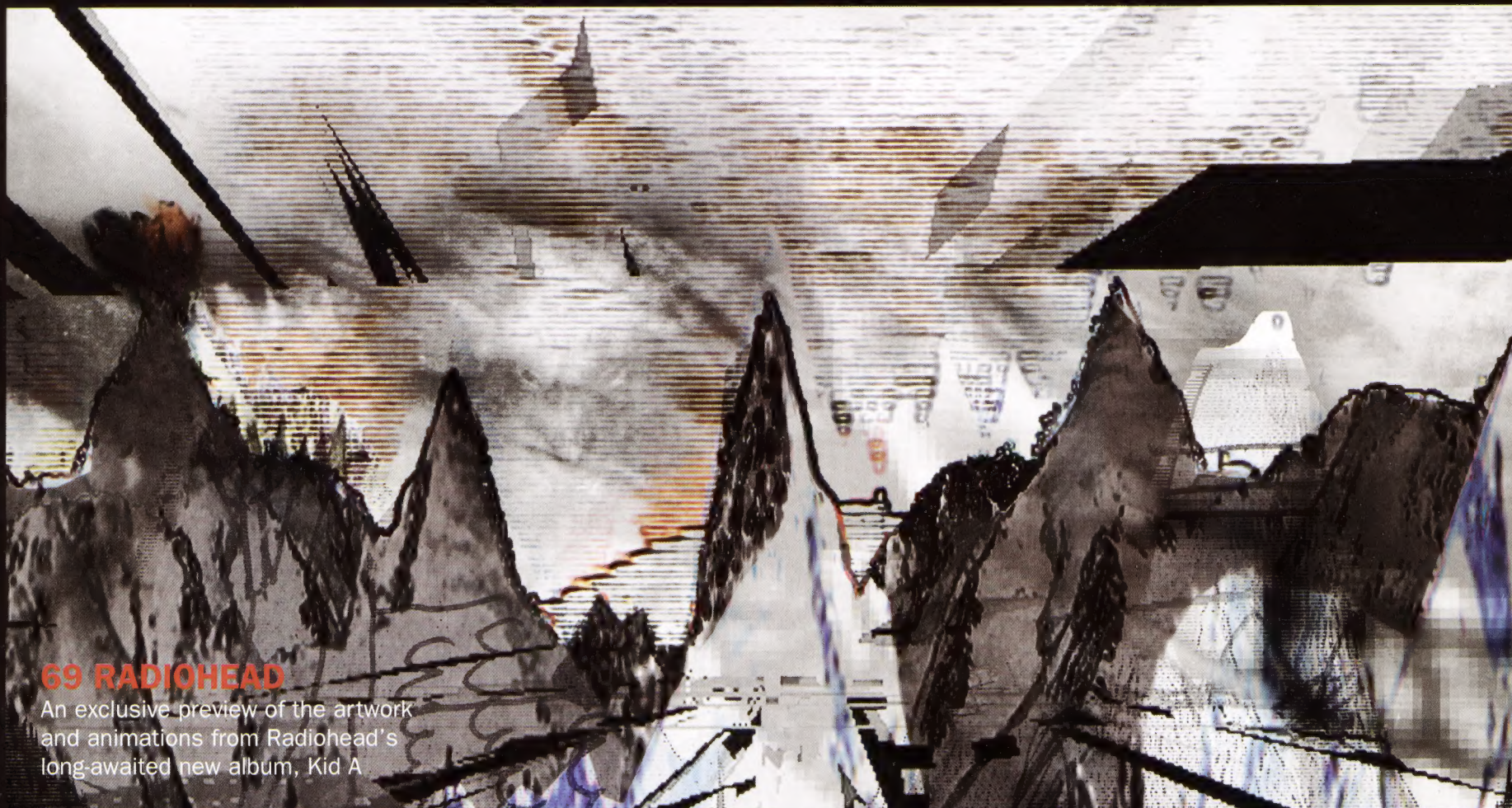


CREATIVE

REVIEW



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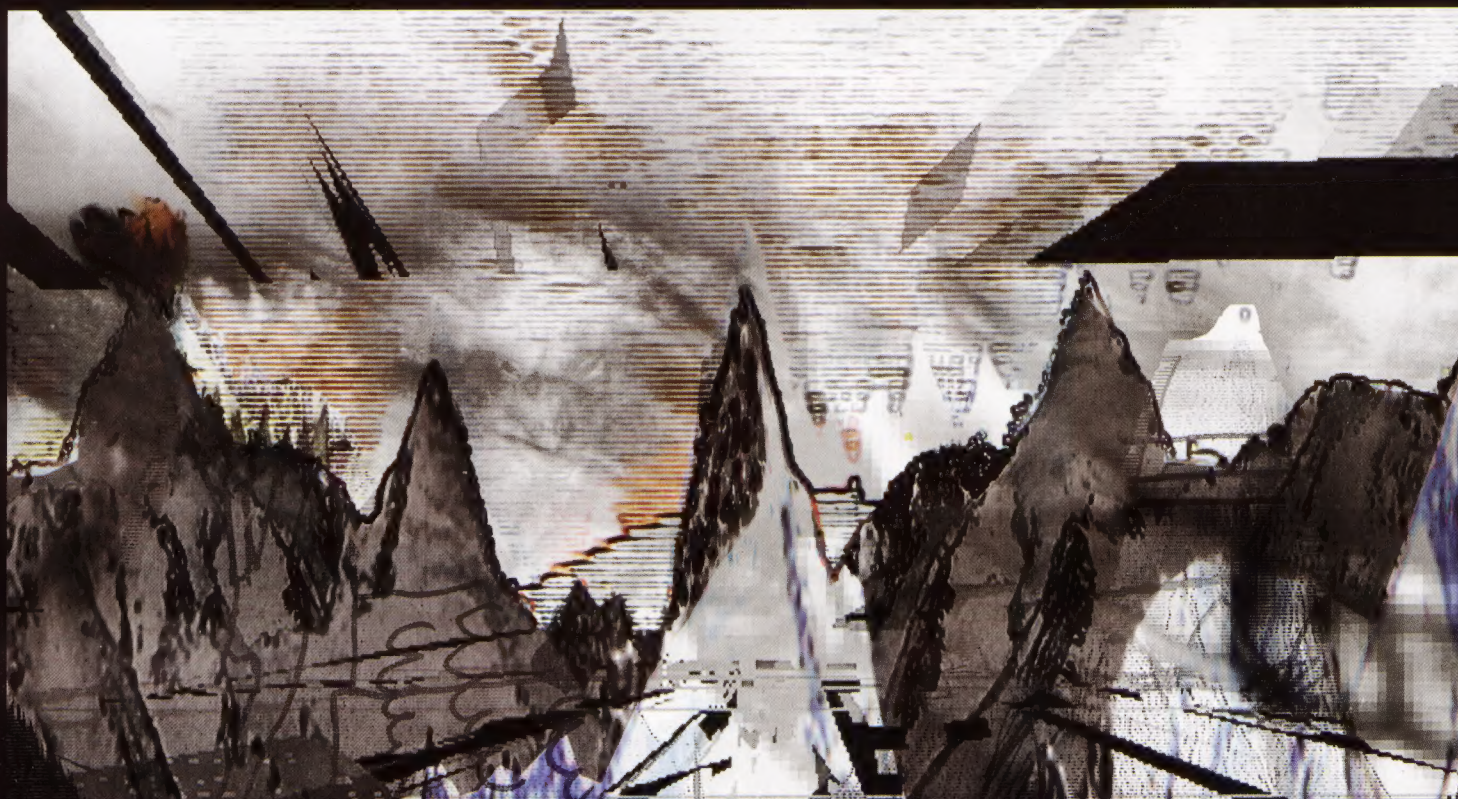
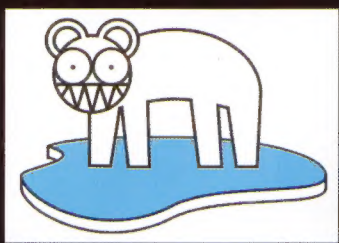
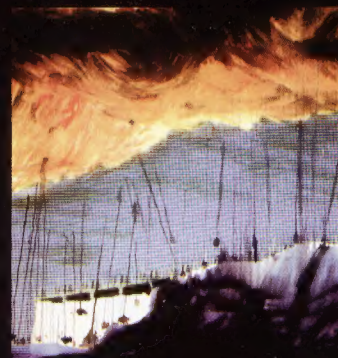
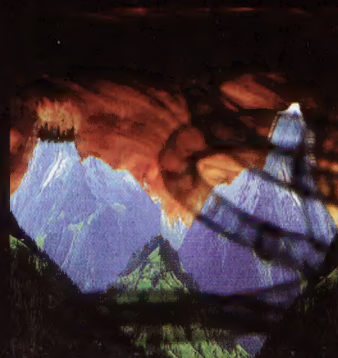
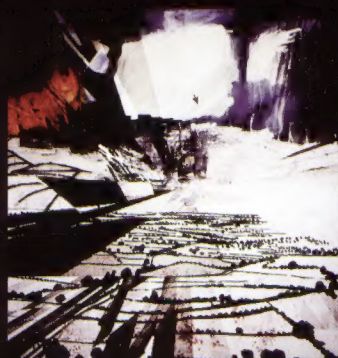




FOR RADIOHEAD'S OK COMPUTER ALBUM, RESIDENT ARTIST STANLEY DONWOOD CREATED SOME OF THE MOST ORIGINAL MUSIC GRAPHICS OF THE 90s. NOW KNOWN JUST AS STANLEY, AND WITH THE HELP OF DOKTOR TCHOCK AND ANIMATORS SHYNOLA AND CHRIS BRAN, HE'S GONE EVEN FURTHER FOR THE BAND'S NEW RELEASE. PAULA CARSON AND HELEN WALTERS HAVE THIS EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW OF THE KID A ARTWORK

MODIFIED ORGANISMS

0.2.99 11:30pm GMT



THE SLEEVE ARTWORK

Prepare yourself: the bears are coming, and boy are they scary. They're everywhere: in the artwork, the animation, the paintings, absolutely everything to do with Radiohead's new album, *Kid A*. Drawn by Stanley (the artist formerly known as Stanley Donwood, see CR, Jan 98) with Doktor Tchock, the creatures originate from a bed time story Stanley used to tell his daughter, in which forgotten toys rise up and eat the adults. These same toys then live happily with the children until they too begin to grow up, and the toys start looking at them with hungry eyes.

Not your average bedtime story, but then Stanley doesn't draw average artwork. The bears first officially featured in an online cartoon strip called *Modified Organisms*, drawn by Stanley with Radiohead

frontman Thom Yorke: now they've got a starring role in the album artwork. "Thom's dedicating the album to the first human clone," Stanley explains, but there's a lot more to the artwork than clones of bears: there's a real sense of apocalyptic destruction throughout.

Radiohead's political beliefs and ideals are well-documented: their website (again designed by Stanley) regularly links to organisations such as Jubilee 2000, which campaigns for the end of world debt. Stanley doesn't shy away from at least attempting to address serious issues within this work: one image has a wireframe monster stalking the land. "The dinosaurs roaming the earth are like these rapacious corporations storming over the planet and chewing it up," he says. Another image which appears throughout is the icon of a

swimming pool. This refers to the idea that one pool can hold the blood of 50,000 people: the CIA apparently assesses how bad an atrocity is by calculating how many swimming pools the amount of blood spilled would fill.

Stanley began working on this project shortly after *OK Computer* was released, and one of his main priorities was to move away from the "white and scratchy" graphics of that particular album cover. Based with the band, he has listened to the new music as it has been written and rewritten, and all of the artwork has undergone a similarly organic process. Plundering his old sketch books for drawings and inspiration, he also painted 10 huge canvases (6' x 6') using Artex paint. These were photographed, scanned and computer graphics then added, which means that sections of one painting can and

Stanley painted on huge canvases which he photographed, scanned and then combined with drawings from old sketch books and other found imagery: the previous page shows *The Cotswolds*, featuring a drawing from early 1999, which is in a secret booklet with the CD (cover shown, 8.) 1, 3 & 4. Original paintings. 2. Targetland is the CD back cover. 5. Note the wireframe monster in this image, Austria. 6 & 7. Icons. 9. Land/Freedom Combined

do appear throughout. "You kind of get obsessed with certain shapes and ideas and images," he says. "Because it's all done over the period of a year or two, you keep doing things and subtly changing them. You try so many different things, and then you forget the original plan and it ends up being loads better than what you were going to do anyway."

Stanley originally wanted to use an image of the 1950s children's book heroes, Peter and Jane staring out over his "epic landscape" of chaos and destruction. Publisher Ladybird apparently refused permission on the grounds that it was not appropriate to use a learning resource for children in this way: their sweet, innocent characters should not be subjected to such grim bleakness. Ironical really, because that's the whole point that Stanley's making.

THE BLIPVERTS

Never ones to opt for the obvious, Radiohead will not be releasing any singles from the album *Kid A*, nor will they make any pop promos: instead a series of 10–40 second animated video “blips” will appear during TV ad breaks and on MTV featuring excerpts from the new album.

Half the blips are from animator Chris Bran, who worked alongside the band last year on their webcasts, the other half from ex-Creative Futures Shynola (CR Sept). “I created a few animations using Stanley’s artwork... This footage then evolved into the current project,” explains Bran.

“It started from Chris taking footage from the webcast and he made these weird little blips and we saw them and said yeah! Excellent!” agrees Stanley. As creative director of

the project, he provided photographs of his paintings and lots of unseen material from his sketchbooks. “You only had to look at it to pick up on the themes that were there,” says Shynola director Richard Kenworthy. “He came over and explained a few of the pictures and what it was about. After that we were given the album to listen to, so for a week we just sat and listened and looked at pictures. Then we just did what we wanted.

“In some cases we brought the pictures to life while in other cases we took his elements and made collages out of it,” he continues. “In other cases we just did stuff inspired by the music.”

“All Stanley’s work is stunning and very unique,” enthuses Bran. “After I saw it I sat down at my computer and worked for three months solid. Adding

the music inspired new ideas, so all the animations went through many different versions.”

“They’re quite political and pessimistic,” says Kenworthy. “There’s stuff about war and death, death by nature, how we’re raping the earth. Stanley has a whole theory about an ice age that’s going to come and destroy the world – and that theme crops up in Thom’s lyrics. I think Thom shares a lot of his ideas with Stanley, so it’s all very inspired by what the songs are about.”

And the end product? “They go from *Blair Witch* to *Captain Pugwash*,” says Stanley. “Some of them are stupid – but the important thing is they’re meant to be throwaway, not works of art... they’ll just be on between Jif Micro Liquid and Volvo.” “We’re hoping people will see it and

Themes explored in Stanley’s work include genetically modified bears, brought to life by Shynola in a series of animated blips, 1–5. Radiohead singer Thom Yorke’s head (3) was assembled by Kenworthy from hundreds of shots of Yorke he found on the internet. Bran’s blips (6–9) include flying bears, with “the look and atmosphere of a children’s cartoon hijacked by a twisted horror film” and *Fireland* (9) featuring “an oil fire burning furiously on a freezing white glacier”

think ‘what the fuck was that?’ It’s a very strange thing to have in an ad break” adds Kenworthy.

“We’re used to taking in loads of information really quickly,” claims Stanley. “It seems rather bloated to sit and watch a film for four minutes. With these, you watch them and go ‘what?’ and it’s gone. It’s a nice thing – you’re being briefly teased in a nice way.” Those keen to see a preview of the blips can see a selection on the net. Says Stanley: “Eight or nine have been hacked out of a secure server at EMI that wasn’t really very secure: that’s a really nice way for them to go out. I love all this unofficial stuff: there’s so many Radiohead sites, and they do all the stuff we don’t want to do, like put up the news that fans are actually interested in. That leaves us free for our self-indulgent waffling.” ■

